

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing coupons by a self checkout system, wherein the
self checkout system comprises at least one self checkout station coupled to a server, the
method comprising:

(a) receiving a coupon from a customer by one of the at least one self checkout
stations;

(b) attempting to validate the coupon against at least one item scanned by the
customer; and

(c) storing the coupon in a coupon pool at the server if the coupon fails to
validate against the at least one item, such that the stored coupon can be utilized at a
subsequent sales transaction.

15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the coupon is a paper coupon and the

storing step (c) further comprises:

(c1) converting the paper coupon into an electronic coupon;

(c2) transmitting the electronic coupon from the one self checkout station to the
server; and

(c3) destroying the paper coupon.

20 3. The method of claim 1, wherein storing step (c) further comprises:

(c1) converting the paper coupon into an electronic coupon;

(c2) collecting tracking information related to the coupon and storing the tracking

information in a file at the server; and

(c3) storing the coupon in a global pool at the server, wherein the global pool is accessible by all customers.

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4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

(d) allowing a second customer in the subsequent sales transaction to utilize the coupon in the global pool.

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5. The method of claim 4, wherein the allowing step (d) further comprises:

(d1) searching the global pool for a coupon that validates against an item scanned by the second customer during the subsequent sales transaction; and
(d2) deducting a value of the coupon from a price of the item if the coupon and the item are validated.

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6. The method of claim 1, wherein storing step (c) further comprises:

(c1) storing the coupon in a personal pool at the server, wherein the personal pool is associated with the customer.

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7. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

(d) accessing the global pool at the server by the customer;
(e) selecting at least one coupon in the global pool; and
(f) transferring the selected coupon to a personal account at the server.

8. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
- (d) receiving the tracking information in the file by an item manufacturer;
 - (e) accessing the global pool at the server by the item manufacturer;
 - (f) selecting at least one coupon in the global pool;
 - 5 (g) analyzing the tracking information for the selected coupon; and
 - (h) modifying the selected coupon.
9. The method of claim 8 wherein the modifying step (h) further comprising:
- (h1) modifying a price of the item based on the analysis.
- 10 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
- (i) implementing the modified price immediately via an electronic shelf label associated with the item.
- 15 11. The method of claim 8 wherein the modifying step (h) further comprising:
- (h1) modifying an expiration date of the selected coupon.
12. A computer readable medium containing program instructions for processing coupons by a self checkout system, wherein the self checkout system comprises 20 at least one self checkout station coupled to a server, the program instructions for:
- (a) receiving a coupon from the customer by one of the at least one self checkout stations;
 - (b) attempting to validate the coupon against at least one item scanned by the

customer at the one self checkout station; and

(c) storing the coupon in a coupon pool at the server if the coupon fails to validate against the at least one item, such that the stored coupon can be utilized at a subsequent sales transaction.

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13. The computer readable medium of claim 12, wherein the coupon is a paper coupon and the storing instruction (c) further comprises:

(c1) converting the paper coupon into an electronic coupon;
(c2) transmitting the electronic coupon from the one self checkout station to the
10 server; and
(c3) destroying the paper coupon.

14. The computer readable medium of claim 12, wherein storing instruction (c)
further comprises:

15 (c1) converting the paper coupon into an electronic coupon;
(c2) collecting tracking information related to the coupon and storing the tracking
information in a file at the server; and
(c3) storing the coupon in a global pool at the server, wherein the global pool is
accessible by all customers.

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15. The computer readable medium of claim 14 further comprising:
(d) allowing a second customer in the subsequent sales transaction to utilize the
coupon in the global pool.

16. The computer readable medium of claim 15, wherein the allowing
instruction (d) further comprises:

- (d1) searching the global pool for a coupon that validates against an item scanned
by the second customer during the subsequent sales transaction; and
5 (d2) deducting a value of the coupon from a price of the item if the coupon and
the item are validated.

17. The computer readable medium of claim 12, wherein storing instruction (c)
further comprises:

- 10 (c1) storing the coupon in a personal pool at the server, wherein the personal pool
is associated with the customer.

18. The computer readable medium of claim 14 further comprising:

- 15 (d) accessing the global pool at the server by the customer;
(e) selecting at least one coupon in the global pool; and
(f) transferring the selected coupon to a personal account at the server.

19. The computer readable medium of claim 14 further comprising:

- 20 (d) receiving the tracking information in the file by an item manufacturer;
(e) accessing the global pool at the server by the item manufacturer;
(f) selecting at least one coupon in the global pool;
(g) analyzing the tracking information for the selected coupon; and
(h) modifying the selected coupon.

20. The computer readable medium of claim 19 wherein the modifying instruction (h) further comprising:

(h1) modifying a price of the item based on the analysis.

5 21. The computer readable medium of claim 20, further comprising:

(i) implementing the modified price immediately via an electronic shelf label associated with the item.

10 22. The method of claim 19 wherein the modifying instruction (h) further comprising:

(h1) modifying an expiration date of the selected coupon.

15 23. A self checkout system comprising:

a server for managing the self checkout system; and

at least one self checkout station coupled to the server, wherein the at least one self checkout station comprises:

a scanner for scanning at least one item for purchase by a customer;

a coupon reader for receiving a coupon from the customer; and

20 a coupon manager for validating the coupon against the at least one item scanned by the customer, wherein if the coupon fails to validate, the coupon manager stores the coupon in a coupon pool at the server such that the stored coupon can be utilized at a subsequent sales transaction.

24. The self checkout system of claim 23, wherein the server comprises a global pool for storing the unvalidated coupon, wherein the global pool is accessible by all customers.

5 25. The self checkout system of claim 24, wherein the server further comprises communication means for allowing a customer or item manufacturer to access the global pool.